

# First to Fire—

## 4th Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 203rd Corps, Afghanistan National Army

In October 2005, the 4th Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 203rd Corps Afghanistan National Army (4/2/203 ANA) graduated from Kabul Military Training Center (KMTC). In October 2006, this battalion's FA battery became the first Afghan FA unit to shoot indirect fires in combat.

The *Kandak* (battalion) is a combat support battalion with a company each of reconnaissance, engineer and Field Artillery personnel plus a headquarters and headquarters company (HHC). The officers in the *Kandak* FA battery have been in the armies of Afghanistan for from 10 to 30 years. Most were trained by the Soviets.

The Afghan's basic FA training focused on basic Military Occupational Skill (MOS) 13B10 Cannoneer Crew-member tasks for direct fire. The training culminated with a direct-fire shoot. However, when the *Kandak* was stationed in the Regional Corps Advisory Group-East's (RCAG-E's) area of operations, it conducted infantry tasks because it had no FA equipment. Even after the battery was fielded two Russian D-30 122-mm howitzers in March 2006, it still conducted infantry maneuver tasks in part of the *Kandak*'s battlespace.

In June 2006, a team of two US FA advisors, a captain and sergeant first class (SFC), were embedded in the Afghan battery and started focusing it on Artillery tasks with the new howitzers. In July, the battery successfully conducted a direct-fire mission on suspected enemy caves. However, the 203rd ANA Corps and the Ministry of Defense wanted the ANA to be able to provide indirect fires.

In support of Operation Mountain Fury, the US advisors and 15 ANA Soldiers moved to a forward operating base (FOB) near the Pakistani border where the anti-Coalition military (ACM) was active. After four days of maintenance, emplacement and crew drills, the ANA crew was ready to fire its first indirect fire mission.

A USFA unit stationed on the FOB, part



An Afghanistan National Army soldier rams the round into a Russian D-30 122-mm howitzer during training for the unit's first live fire. In October 2006, the 4th Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 203rd Corps Afghanistan National Army (4/2/203 ANA) FA battery became the first Afghan FA unit to shoot indirect fires in combat.

of the 10th Mountain Division, oversaw the ANA soldiers' laying the guns and the methods of gunnery computation. The Coalition maneuver unit assigned a priority target on a historical rocket point of origin (POO) site and tasked the ANA Artillery to conduct harassment and interdiction fires.

The ANA FA platoon leader, Lieutenant Najeebalah, worked with the US officer advisor in the maneuver tactical operations center (TOC) while ANA SFC Mirwis, the Section Chief, and his gun crew worked with the US NCO advisor. Lieutenant Najeebalah plotted the priority target on his POU-9Y plotting board and determined the range, vertical interval and the angle of displacement of the distant aiming point (DAP) and radioed the fire mission for the Russian D-30 to SFC Mirwis.

SFC Mirwis had his soldiers line up and counted off their positions. Each ANA soldier ran to his assigned position, and the gun was ready to fire. All the gun data was verified by the US NCO advisor, who acted as a safety NCO.

The first round, which is the first combat indirect Field Artillery mission

in Afghanistan, was fired by a 50-foot lanyard at 191059Z OCT 2006. The round was observed by the US joint land-attack cruise missile elevated netted sensor (JLENS) that was approximately 15,000 meters away; the round landed slightly over the intended target.

Lieutenant Najeebalah gave the command to repeat, and the impact was verified. Within the TOC, the US advisor gave a correction grid (no ANA observers available) to Lieutenant Najeebalah, and he computed the correction data. The lieutenant called the corrections to SFC Mirwis. The corrections were placed on the howitzer, and the round was observed within 100 meters of the intended target.

Lieutenant Najeebalah then ordered a three-round repeat on this target because of his effects on target. This ANA Field Artillery battery proudly earned the right to be referred to as *First to Fire!*

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